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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000581

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/PPD (DAVID BENZE), NEA/ARP (BJACKSON), NEA/PPD,  
IIP/NEA/SCA (BANDLER), NEA/PI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [KIRC](#) [OIIP](#) [XF](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: IIP TRAVELING SPEAKER PROGRAM WITH MS. ZAINAB AL-SUWEIJ

11. Summary: Ms. Zainab Al-Suwaij, Executive Director of the American Islamic Congress, came to Kuwait for four days as an IIP Arabic Supplemental-funded traveling speaker and discussed with Kuwaitis Western-Muslim perceptions of each other, civil society and women rights, democracy-building in Iraq, and Muslims in America. She won the audience over with her native Arabic language skills and heartfelt advocacy. She spoke at the Islamic Moderation Center, the American University in Kuwait, Kuwait University, the Kuwait Lawyers' Association, the AWARE Center for Western-Arab Relations and a political salon ("diwaniya") in the home of a former minister of Information. She also appeared on Kuwait TV and gave an exclusive interview to an Arabic-language daily newspaper. We recommend her most highly to other posts for any programs directed at conservative Muslim audiences. In all about eighty people were reached directly; perhaps 50,000 through the media. (End summary)

//ZAINAB AL-SUWEIJ'S VENUES IN KUWAIT//

12. Ms. Zainab Al-Suwaij came to Kuwait for four programming days and interacted with Kuwaitis in the following venues: a live interview on the "Good Morning Kuwait" program on the English-language Kuwait Television channel, an exclusive interview with Al-Rai Arabic-language daily newspaper, a discussion at the Islamic Moderation Center, a lecture to American University in Kuwait students, a wide-ranging discussion with lawyers at the Kuwait Lawyers' Association, a political salon ("diwaniya") in the home of a former minister of Information accompanied with press coverage, one lecture each at the Mass Communications and Political Science departments of Kuwait University, and a discussion at the AWARE Center for Western-Arab Relations.

//HER MESSAGE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS//

13. Ms. Zainab Al-Suweij did a superb job delivering important messages on Western-Muslim perceptions of each other, the progress Iraqis are making in addressing inter-ethnic tensions and promoting civil society, and women's rights in Islamic society. She also urged Kuwaitis to support helping Iraq get back on its feet. She defended herself very well when verbally challenged by one of the lawyers at their association for having adopted an "American" outlook due to her residence in the U.S. since 1991. She argued convincingly that Iraqis were just as much the victims of Saddam as Kuwaitis were, and stressed that Kuwaitis need to be engaged in, and have confidence in, the fact that Iraqis are working out a new civil society for the first time and will ultimately succeed. At the lawyers' association and other venues she gave a good explanation for why democracy is the antidote to extremists' appeals. She also explained what being a Muslim in America is like and defended her feminist views as being entirely compatible with Islamic values.

//RECOMMENDATION//

14. We recommend Zainab Al-Suweij highly to other posts that are looking to conduct programs in the difficult subject area of Islamic modernism and women's rights.

//SUPPORT OF MISSION PRIORITIES//

¶5. This program supported Mission Kuwait's 2009 MSP goal #1: "Ensure that Kuwait acts as a full partner in U.S. regional security efforts;" and goal #6: "Strengthening Democracy, including the role of parliament, rule of law, and equality for women."

//FUNDING//

¶6. This program was entirely funded by an IIP-administered Arabic Supplemental Grant because of its significant youth audience component.

//AUDIENCES REACHED AND BREAKDOWN//

¶7. In all about eighty people were reached directly; perhaps 50,000 through the media.

Government 5%  
Political Leaders 5%  
Security/Defense 0%  
Educators/Academics 10%  
Students 30%  
Media 10%  
Arts/Culture 0%  
Community/Social/NGO 30%  
Religious 10%  
Business 0%  
General Public 0%

Audience Type (Gender)  
Female 30%  
Male 70%

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Audience Type (Age under 25)

About 50%

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